

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss meeting with the French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna: 1 July 2022

News story

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss met French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris.



Following the NATO Summit in Madrid, the Foreign Secretary stressed the UK's commitment to European security and noted the need for close cooperation with France to strengthen the NATO Alliance.

The Foreign Secretary and Foreign Minister Colonna agreed that the G7 and NATO summits showed the UK and France are united in their response to Russia's war in Ukraine. The two agreed to build on the summits to maintain international unity in supporting Ukraine's fight for freedom and self-determination.

The ministers discussed the importance of increasing assistance to Ukraine to reverse Russian advances. They also spoke about cooperation on sanctions to undermine Putin's war machine and the need for the free world to counter threats from the likes of Russia and China by strengthening security and economic ties.

They spoke about the UK-France relationship and agreed to take forward work to deepen cooperation, as agreed by the Prime Minister and President Macron during their recent discussions, including preparations for a UK-France summit.

Finally, the Foreign Secretary raised the UK's concerns with the Northern Ireland Protocol and highlighted the need for UK legislation in order to fix elements of the Protocol and uphold the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, in the face of the EU's unwillingness to make the necessary changes to the Protocol. She reiterated the UK's preference for a negotiated solution, and stressed that resolving issues like this would unleash the full potential of

the UK-France relationship.

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[Forward Thinking conference – call for papers](#)

We can confirm that this year's Forward Thinking conference will be taking place at Nottingham Trent University.

Abstracts are still being welcomed and the deadline to submit has been extended to Wednesday 14 September.

Following the success of last year's Forward Thinking conference, the Insolvency Service is planning the next conference on Friday 18 November 2022.

The theme for the conference is 'Forward Thinking: Insolvency Response in uncertain times'. We want to provide a platform for insolvency academic research and technical discussions while facilitating a stronger link between academia, the insolvency sector and policy makers, and encourage feedback from interested parties.

Call for papers

We're now inviting scholars, researchers, postgraduate students, insolvency practitioners and anyone else with an interest in insolvency law and related areas to submit their abstracts for an academic or technical paper for presenting at the conference, including:

- an academic research paper, or
- a technical issue relating to insolvency practice

The Insolvency Service welcomes submissions in all areas of personal or corporate insolvency, whether UK or international in focus, and papers should be focused on the central theme of this year's conference, an insolvency response in uncertain times and economic shocks.

The deadline for submission of abstracts is Wednesday 14 September. At this stage, we would like you to submit an abstract of the paper with a maximum of 500 words only.

For selected papers, the final draft will need to be submitted by Friday 14 October ready to be presented at the conference venue in person.

Research submissions will be considered by a panel of insolvency law academics and representatives from the Insolvency Service. Technical submissions will be considered by a panel of Insolvency Service representatives.

Conference format

We expect the conference to feature about 8 papers. Speakers will have approximately 20 minutes to present their paper, with additional time for questions from those at the event and online delegates.

Papers selected for presentation at the conference will be published online, hosted by the Insolvency Service.

Submission of Abstracts

If you wish to submit an abstract, maximum 500 words, please send it to: conference@insolvency.gov.uk.

Your covering email should include:

- whether you are submitting a research paper or a technical issue
- your name
- firm/affiliation/role (where applicable)
- email
- telephone number

These details will be removed when the abstract is forwarded to the panel for consideration. Please ensure the abstract does not contain information or acknowledgments that could reveal your identity, firm or affiliation.

Further information

The venue will be confirmed shortly and if you have any queries, please contact conference@insolvency.gov.uk.

Most significant change to taxi and private hire vehicle accessibility legislation in 12 years

- new laws will ensure disabled people receive help and can travel with dignity and confidence
- disabled people protected against extra charges and rip-off fares
- changes will benefit 13.7 million people

New laws will ensure the 13.7 million disabled people in England, Scotland and Wales receive the assistance they need and will not be charged over the odds when using taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs).

The new Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022, which came into force on 28 June, is the most significant change to taxi accessibility legislation since the Equality Act was introduced 12 years ago.

The 2022 Act amends the Equality Act 2010 to place duties on taxi drivers and PHV drivers and operators, so any disabled person has specific rights and protections to be transported and receive assistance when using a taxi or PHV without being charged extra.

As part of the amendments, taxi and PHV drivers could face fines of up to £1,000 if they fail to provide reasonable mobility assistance to disabled passengers taking a pre-booked vehicle.

This will also ensure that visually impaired passengers will be assisted by drivers to help them identify or find the vehicle. There will also be a duty for local authorities to publicly identify wheelchair-accessible vehicles in their fleets.

The measures will apply to drivers in England, Scotland and Wales and will help to provide consistency of experience for affected passengers.

Wendy Morton, Accessibility Minister, said:

It is fantastic that the updated legislation and guidance will help ensure that all disabled people receive assistance when using taxis and PHVs.

Disabled people account for around a fifth of the population and our Inclusive Transport Strategy is making travel more accessible for all.

The Act was a Private Members' Bill introduced by Jeremy Wright QC MP. Another change will mean that even drivers granted exemption from assistance duties on account of medical needs must still accept the carriage of disabled passengers and will not be able to charge them more than others.

Disability affects 13.7 million people in Great Britain. It includes physical and sensory conditions, as well as impairments that are 'non-visible'.

The amendments to the Equality Act 2010 have been developed by the Department for Transport (DfT) as part of work in support of its 2018 Inclusive Transport Strategy and cross-government commitments on improving access to taxi and PHV services and will benefit a wide range of disabled passengers, as well as their friends and family.

In March 2022, DfT announced a £2.5 million package to help disabled people travel more confidently. This included funding towards mobility centres

across England and to enhance access to lifeline ferry services.

The updated legislation will build on the commitment we made and will make travel more accessible for all.

National recognition for Sellafield Ltd apprenticeship programme

News story

Sellafield Ltd has been listed in the top 100 apprenticeship employers in England for 2022.



All 12 Level 3 Business Administration standard and City & Guilds Level 3 Diplomas passed their end point assessments gaining distinctions.

[The annual rankings](#), produced by the Department for Education, highlight some of the country's most successful programmes that help future apprentices identify opportunities with leading employers.

Sellafield Ltd recruits up to 200 apprentices each year across 18 schemes, and currently has 600 in training.

This year, circa 200 will complete their apprenticeships across multiple disciplines, from Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) to Level 6 (degree level) schemes.

Donna Connor, Sellafield Ltd's head of education and skills said:

Being listed in the top 100 is endorsement of our excellent training programme, working in partnership with our training providers across a wide range of disciplines.

There is a really exciting career ahead for our young people, who have the opportunity to carry out the nationally important work of cleaning up the country's highest hazards and creating a clean and safe environment for future generations.

Over 33% of our current apprentice cohort are female and we retain 95% of our apprentices when they complete their training. I'm delighted that our schemes have received this recognition.

Amongst our many successes this year includes 12 Business Administration students. Business Administration apprentice scheme lead Louise McKain said:

Sellafield Ltd has offered a successful Business Administration apprentice scheme for a number of years which has proven popular with people from different backgrounds and levels of experience.

During the 2 year scheme, our apprentices are provided with 3 placements where they acquire skills to provide quality business administration support to the management teams across a variety of departments.

This year, the 2020 intake of students have obtained Level 3 Business Administration standard and City & Guilds Level 3 Diplomas, and I'm proud to say that for the first time we have seen all 12 pass their end point assessments gaining distinctions.

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[TRA helps preserve critical steel supplies to the UK](#)

News story

The Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) has recommended changes to the tariff rate quotas (TRQs) on imports of certain steel products from Russia and Belarus.



In light of current UK sanctions on imports from Russia and Belarus, the TRA initiated a Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) review of steel imports covered by the UK's safeguard trade remedy measure. The TRA assessed whether the quotas for these countries should be re-allocated to avoid a potential shortage of steel in the UK. The Secretary of State for International Trade has accepted the TRA recommendation and the [HMRC notice detailing the changes](#) was published on Thursday 30 June. The tariff rate quotas (TRQs) will change from 1 July 2022.

Avoiding a shortfall in critical steel supplies to the UK

As with any safeguard measure, the UK has set quotas for different countries or regions to import a certain amount of steel tariff-free into the UK. Once their quota is exhausted, they have to pay a higher tariff rate. Russia and Belarus between them accounted for around 22% of the UK's supply of rebar. The TRA has recommended reallocating the Russia and Belarus quota to other countries and regions including Ukraine, the EU, Turkey and Taiwan.

TRA Chief Executive Oliver Griffiths said: "We have responded to changes in the international steel market following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Reallocating quotas currently held by Russia and Belarus will provide UK firms in the construction, engineering and automotive sectors with access to higher volumes of duty-free steel."

What this means for importers and users of steel in the UK

There are two product categories affected by the re-allocation. Category 1 (non-alloy and other alloy hot rolled sheets and strips) are used in yellow goods, construction, tube-making and the production of downstream steel products. Category 13 (rebars) are used in construction, the automotive industry, engineering and white goods manufacture. New tariff rates may apply to imports of steel in these categories, depending on which country they come from.

Wider changes to the steel safeguards measure

The Government confirmed this week in a [statement](#) that it plans to maintain steel safeguard tariffs on 15 categories of steel imports for two further years, to 2024. The Trade Remedies Authority completed its analysis of the measure under Government direction after the work was called in by the Secretary of State for International Trade. The TRA's final [Report of Findings](#) is available on its public file.

The TRA has also completed two further TRQ reviews related to the steel safeguard measure. These assess:

- whether imports from developing countries exceed 3% of total UK imports, which is the threshold for developing countries to be subject to the safeguard measure
- updates to HMRC data in relation to a small subset of steel product categories.

The TRA's Recommendations on all three TRQ reviews are incorporated in the final TRQ allocations for the safeguard measure and are confirmed in the [taxation notice](#) which takes effect from 1 July.

Background information

- The Trade Remedies Authority is the UK body that investigates whether trade remedies measures are needed on imports. Trade remedy investigations were carried out by the EU Commission on the UK's behalf until the UK left the EU.
- Safeguard measures are one of the three types of trade remedies – along with anti-dumping measures which counter goods being 'dumped' into countries at prices below their normal price in their country of origin and countervailing measures against countervailable subsidies – that are allowed under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules.
- Forty-four EU trade remedies measures that were of interest to UK producers were carried across into UK law when the UK left the EU and the TRA needs to review each one to check if it is suitable for UK needs.
- As part of this process, the TRA reviewed a safeguard measure on certain steel products, reporting its recommendation in June 2021. The TRA recommended that measures should be extended on some steel products but removed on others, where they were not needed. The TRA was subsequently asked to reconsider this decision. The reconsideration was 'called in' by the Secretary of State for International Trade. The TRA completed the reconsideration under her direction.
- Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) are part of the World Trade Organization (WTO) framework. They specify how much of a product can be imported from a country before its imports are subject to higher tariffs. The UK's trade remedies system follows WTO rules and is designed to make sure UK industries are not damaged by unfair trade practices or unexpected surges in imports.

- The UK has the power to review its Tariff Rate Quotas on imports covered by safeguard measures to make sure its safeguard measures remain up to date and useful. This is not part of the reconsideration process.

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